

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
EUGENE DISTRICT OFFICE

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT NO. OR090-99-04

ODF/BLM Cooperative Agreement, Right-of-Way Permit E-213

I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

The proposed action would provide access to property owned by the State of Oregon located in Section 24, T. 17 S., R. 8 W.. As a result of this proposal, the State of Oregon would reconstruct 277 feet of road across BLM land in Section 23, T. 17 S., R.8 W. for the purpose of general forest management, which includes timber harvest.

The proposed action is tiered to and in conformance with the "Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl" (April 1994), the "Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan" (June 1995) and the "Late-Successional Reserve Assessment" Oregon Coast Range Province (R0267, R0268) (June 1997).

Plan maintenance documentation postponing surveys for 32 Component 2 and Protection Buffer species was recently completed ("Plan Maintenance Documentation, USDI Bureau of Land Management, To Change the Implementation Schedule for Survey and Manage and Protection Buffer Species," approved March 3, 1999). The Proposed Action and alternatives are in conformance with the direction provided in the Plan Maintenance Documentation. The implementation of the plan maintenance is provided for by BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.5-4).

The effect of the plan maintenance action was analyzed in an environmental assessment, "To Change the Implementation Schedule for Survey and Manage and Protection Buffer Species," issued October 7, 1998 ("Schedule Change EA"). The analysis contained in the Schedule Change EA is incorporated into this document by reference. Both the Schedule Change EA and the Plan Maintenance Documentation are available for viewing at the Eugene BLM District Office or on the internet at <http://www.or.blm.gov/nwfp.htm>.

This action is also consistent with the BLM/State of Oregon Cooperative Reciprocal Right-of-Way agreement.

II. PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

A. Proposed Action and Design Features

The proposed action would approve a request from the Oregon Department of Forestry to reconstruct 277 feet of road across BLM lands located in Section 23, T. 17 S., R. 8 W., W.M., Coast Range Resource Area. The Spur is proposed to be rocked with 33 yards/station of 3" minus. The proposed reconstruction would access unit No. 4 of the Miller Head Combo State of Oregon Timber Sale. This unit is a 41 acre clearcut in a predominately alder stand with a fringe of 65 year old Douglas-fir on the ridgetop. ODF has indicated that they desire long term access to this unit.

- a. Reconstruction of the road would be limited to periods of dry weather. The clearing of brush, grubbing of stumps, excavation, and embankment reconstruction would be as follows:
 - A 16 foot 2% subgrade with (1') extra widening on fills.
 - BLM will set excavation control points (slope stakes) prior to construction to assure the road is set into the hill
 - 1/2:1 cutslopes in common material. 1/4:1 cutslopes in rock.
 - No filling on side slopes in excess of 40%
 - Tree tops, stumps and brush shall be scattered outside the road prism.
 - Surface the roadbed with an 6 inch depth of crushed aggregate, if winter operations are intended.
 - all road surface drainage would need to be detoured away from the route and drained across existing Road No. 17-8-13.
- b. Any Merchantable trees within the Right-of-Way would be retained by BLM. Red alder trees within the project area identified with *Ulota megalospora* presence be preserved as much as possible. Where removal of a tree is necessary for ROW purposes, trees will be cut at ground level and/or pushed out of the immediate disturbance area to be left in the adjacent area. This action along with leaving undisturbed *Ulota megalospora* sites adjacent to and outside of the project footprint, would assure adequate protection/presence for this species.
- c. Cleaning of heavy equipment prior to entering BLM land to help minimize the spread of noxious weeds would be required.
- d. To help maintain the existing native plant communities, roadsides would not be seeded with non-native species mixtures. If deemed necessary for erosion control, areas would be seeded with an annual (70%) and perennial (30%) rye mixture with strict guidelines on seed purity (little crop content and no noxious weed content).

B. Alternatives

The no action alternative would be to deny the request, on the basis that the proposed action would disrupt the management of BLM lands. The State of Oregon would either use alternate routes on State land or drop out a portion of their harvest unit.

To access the same ridge as the proposed route, using only State lands, there would be two other road construction alternatives:

No action Alternative No 1

To access the same ridge as the proposed route, this alternative would leave Road No. 17-8-13 approximately 900' south than the proposed route. Unlike the proposed route, this alternative would direct traffic to the south towards Walker Mountain (refer to the map) rather than north towards Nelson Mountain Road. The road would descend immediately on 75% sideslope for 700 feet in length at an -18% grade before flattening out on the ridge.

The positive aspects of this route over the proposed route are:

- a. does not cross BLM land.

The negative aspects of this route over the proposed route are:

- a. All new construction on steep ground would generate more excavation. Slope stability is questionable.
- b. Adverse haul grades at 18% to Road #17-8-13.
- c. Southerly haul on Road No.17-8-13 is also on an adverse grade towards Walker Mountain.

No Action Alternative No. 2

This alternative would begin at the same location as alternative No.1. The alternative would easily traverse ridge top for about 150' at a 10% grade to an old existing road. From here it follows the existing sidehill grade easterly for approximately 200' to the ridge that ODF wants to access for this sale. However from this point the grade of the ridge ranges from a minus 30-35% for approximately 350' in length. Due to the excessive grade (30-35%), this route would only accommodate either a cable swing, tractor swing or a tractor assist road to log the unit.

The positive aspects of this route over the proposed route are:

- a. does not cross BLM land.
- b. Either existing road or ridge top location rather than full bench reconstruction.

The negative aspects of this route over the proposed route are:

- a. Does not provide long term access.
- b. Adverse haul grades at 18% to Road #17-8-13.
- c. Southerly haul on Road#17-8-13 is also on an adverse grade towards Walker Mountain.
- d. Additional costs for swing log or tractor assist.

ODF has indicated that they desire long term access to their unit and will not consider alternative No. 2 over alternative No. 1. There is no risk to BLM ground with either no action alternative and the risk to BLM ground with the proposed route would be minimal provided that the road is set sufficiently into the hill as recommended by Mark Truby (USFS Geotech).

III. ISSUES NOT ANALYZED

No site specific surveys were completed for any of the 32 Component 2 or Protection Buffer species listed in the Schedule Change EA. Individuals of *Ulotia megalospora* were found, incidental

to other surveys, and appropriate management actions would be implemented under all alternatives. However, it is possible that additional individuals may reside in the project area. The issue of how the Proposed Action and alternatives would impact potential locations of certain Component 2 or Protection Buffer species was not analyzed because impacts are not expected to exceed those anticipated in the Schedule Change EA.

IV. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Soils

The proposed road takes off from a narrow saddle and requires a 9 foot high fill to intersect an old road bed. Immediately downhill (15 feet left of the P-line) of this fill is a head scarp of an old slope movement. The proposed road then goes from a fill to a cut section that follows the old roadbed. The old road was constructed as a balanced section with excavated materials being sidecast on steep slope. The materials profile (observable along the cutback of the old roadbed) typically consists of a thin soil profile (from 1-3 feet) of a silty sand overlaying the sandstone bedrock. When the road was constructed the soil and underlying bedrock was excavated and sidecast to form the roadbed. As evidenced along the route, this material has continually consolidated and moved down slope as witnessed by the numerous tension cracks near the outside edge to the old cut/fill boundary.

Vegetation

The project area is on a roadside Douglas fir/red alder community with tree diameters less than 12". The old road cut, once filled and then removed, now supports a red alder overstory of approximately 10-20 years of age. Vine maple, salal, dwarf Oregon grape and baldhip rose are major shrub components. There is a fairly weedy understory including St. John's wort, Canada thistle, trailing blackberry, and various grasses

The land use allocation within the proposed project area is LSR. The Standards and Guidelines of the "Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan" (June 1995) C-19 state:

"Access to nonfederal lands through Late-Successional Reserves will be considered and existing right-of-way agreements, contracted rights, easements, and special use permits in Late-Successional Reserves will be recognized as valid uses. New access proposals may require mitigation measures to reduce adverse effects on Late-Successional Reserves. In these cases, alternate routes that avoid late successional habitat should be considered. If roads must be routed through a reserve, they will be designed and located to have the least impact on late successional habitat."

The location of the proposed action, following an old road bed, offers a route that will have a minimal impact on late successional habitat.

Wildlife

The project area does not qualify as suitable habitat for any listed or proposed wildlife species.

Aquatic and Riparian Resources and Fisheries

There are no intermittent or perennial streams within the boundaries of the project area.

Botany

No Threatened, Endangered or BLM Special Status vascular plant species were located during botanical surveys although 4 sites of *Ulotia megalospora*, a Protection Buffer moss species, were located; 3 inside the project area, 1 outside the project boundary but immediately nearby on the opposite side of road (see map for locations). Three more off-site locations of *Ulotia* were located nearby but well outside of the disturbance area of the proposed right-of-way during a site visit on February 17, 1999.

Noxious Weeds and Non-native Plant Species: Scattered plants of both Canada thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) were noted in the project area.

Cultural Resources

A cultural resource inventory of the project areas has not been completed. The chances of finding cultural resources in the project areas are small.

V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

A. Affected Resources

Soils

The cumulative effect of the Proposed Action would be to decrease approximately 0.25 acres from the BLM forest land base, by converting it into road right-of-way.

Vegetation

The cumulative effect of the Proposed Action would be to decrease approximately 0.25 acres from the BLM forest land base, by converting it into road right-of-way.

Wildlife

There are no known activity centers for any federally proposed or listed terrestrial wildlife species within 0.25 miles of the proposed project area, and no habitat for them would be modified on federal lands.

Because of the age of the stand and the short distance on Federal ownership involved, this action would not jeopardize the continued existence of any Survey and Manage mollusks species as a whole or the local population.

In regards to unit No. 4 of the State of the Oregon Department of Forestry's proposal for the Miller Head Combo Timber Sale: Within the 65 year-old harvest unit of Douglas fir there are no known activity centers for any federally listed or proposed terrestrial species. The unit contains marginal habitat of poor quality because of scattered remnant Douglas-firs. But without lateral cover provided by adjacent larger trees, the value of the remnants are significantly diminished from a spotted owl/marbled murrelet standpoint. An ODF memo dated April 8, 1999 indicates that Douglas firs greater than 30 inches DBH would be left standing.

Consequently, this action could proceed with "No Affect" to the species mentioned above.

Aquatic and Riparian Resources and Fisheries

This project will be a no affect for the coho.

No aquatic or riparian habitat is present on public land. Coho salmon, a Federally listed threatened species, is present in the basin. The absence of aquatic habitat and any hydrologic connection between public lands in the proposed project area and Coho habitat elsewhere in the basin result in a no affect on the Coho or its habitat as a result of the proposed action on public lands.

Botany

Ulota megalospora is a PB moss species for which little information was available at the time the ROD was completed. It is now thought that *Ulota megalospora* is widespread across the range of the Northern Spotted Owl and not confined to old-growth forests as was originally assumed at the time the Forest Plan was completed (pers. comm Judy Harpel, Regional Bryophyte Taxon Lead, Gifford Pinchot National Forest). Draft Management Recommendations for Bryophytes (1996) further indicate that protection of all sites of *Ulota megalospora* is not required:

"The level of risk for this species is low, based on the relatively large number of known sites and the apparent tolerance of this species to some degree of desiccation...

Particularly, management for this species is not necessary at all sites where several populations occur nearby. If disjunct or highly localized populations are identified, they should be maintained...

At the end of 1998, a total of 52 project areas over the entire Eugene District, involving 5579 acres, had been surveyed for *Ulota megalospora* according to Eugene District survey protocols (Kirkland Dispatch, S&M resurveys, July 28, 1998; Draft *Ulota megalospora* Interim survey protocol, Jan. 28, 1999). Of those 52 project areas, 41 were found to contain *Ulota megalospora*. *Ulota megalospora* was found in 12 of 17 projects (including this one) involving 1260 acres in the Coast Range Resource Area, 21 of 35 project areas involving 2800 acres in the Mckenzie Resource Area, and 8 of 10 project areas involving 1519 acres in the South Valley Resource Area. Adjacent BLM Resource Areas and Forest Service District botanists to the north and south of the Eugene District have also reported numerous locations of this species and have indicated that this species is found on a wide variety of substrates and seral stages.

This species is known to occur in three other project locations within this same watershed, Wildcat watershed. Thus far, every location that has been searched for this species in the Wildcat watershed has contained this species. It is also assumed that a great deal of *Ulota megalospora* is harbored on the twigs in the overstory canopy that is unreachable for our survey purposes. It is therefore highly likely that additional populations and habitat for this species will be preserved in the canopy of other green trees (both conifers and hardwoods) that are retained throughout the project area.

Cultural Resources

No cultural resources are expected to be affected. The guidelines of the Memorandum of

Understanding between the Bureau of Land Management and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Officer (December 13, 1994) makes the conclusion "that the chances of finding important historical properties in the area are such that further cultural resource survey prior to project implementation are so minimal that they do not justify the continued expenditure of Federal funds in this effort".

B. Unaffected Resources

The following resources are either not present or would not be affected by the Proposed Action:

1. Cultural Resources and Native American Religious Concerns.
2. Wild and Scenic Rivers, Wilderness, or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern.
3. Farmlands
4. Hazardous or Solid Wastes
5. Low income and minority populations.
6. Threatened or endangered species

VI. MITIGATION

Surveys for the 32 species listed in the Schedule Change EA will begin if technical feasibility problems can be solved. If it is determined by species experts that survey feasibility issues have been resolved throughout the suspected range of any of the 32 species, and if a letter of direction is received prior to issuance of a Decision Record, surveys and appropriate management actions would be implemented.

VII. CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

A. LIST OF PREPARERS

The following BLM resource specialists have examined the Proposed Action and provided either written or verbal input utilized in this assessment:

Dan Crannell	BLM Wildlife Biologist
Barry Williams	BLM Soil Scientist
Neil Armentrout	BLM Fisheries Biologist
Mike Southard	BLM District Archaeologist
Kathy Pendergrass	BLM Botanist
Gary Hoppe	BLM Planner
Eric Meyers	BLM Civil Engineer Technician

B. Agencies, groups and individuals consulted

Oregon Department of Forestry - Art McCoy, State Lands Forester

U.S. Forest Service - Mark Trubee, Willamette National Forest Geotechnical Engineer

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service - The project was determined to have "no effect" on any listed species, therefore no formal consultation is required.

National Marine Fisheries Service - There would be a no affect for any Federally protected or proposed fish species, therefore no formal consultation is required.

VIII. REFERENCES

USDA, Forest Service and USDI, Bureau of Land Management. February 1994. *Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on Management of Habitat for Late-Successional and Old-Growth Forest Related Species Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*. Washington D.C.

USDA, Forest Service and USDI, Bureau of Land Management. April 1994. *Record of Decision for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl*. Washington D.C.

USDA, Forest Service and USDI, Bureau of Land Management. October 1998. *Environmental Assessment (EA) - To Change the Implementation Schedule for Survey and Manage and Protection Buffer Species*.

USDI, Bureau of Land Management. March 1999. *Wildcat Creek Watershed Analysis*. Eugene District Office. Eugene, OR.

USDI, Bureau of Land Management. June 1995. *Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan*. Eugene District Office, Eugene, Oregon.

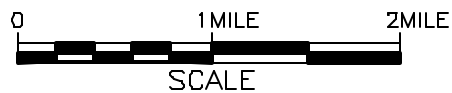
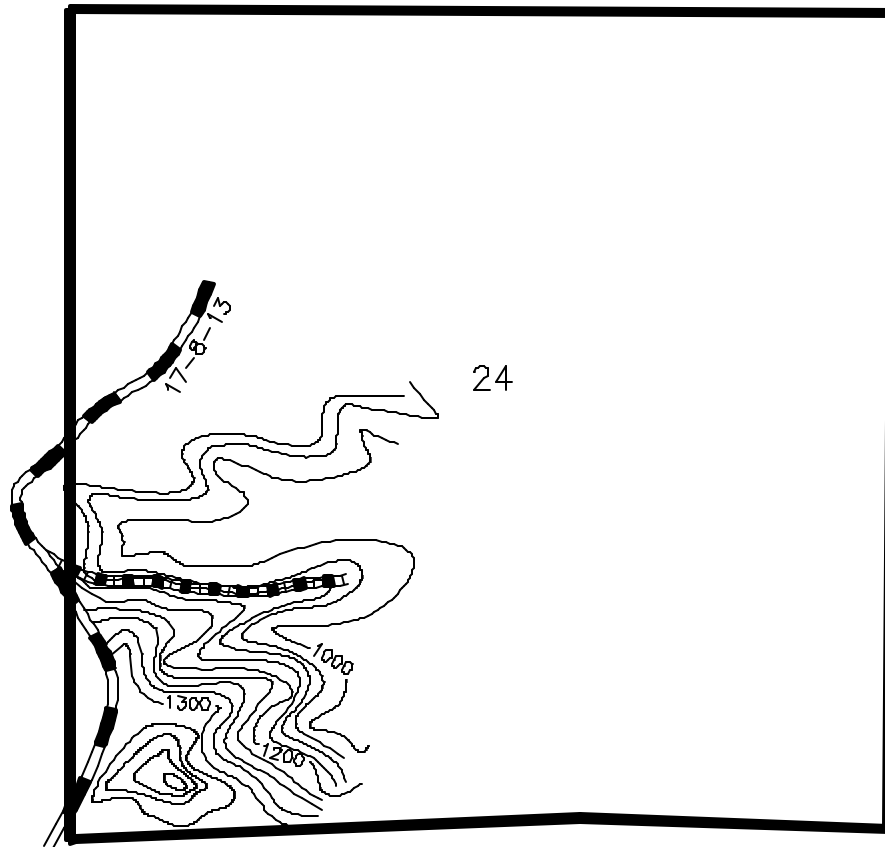
USDI, Bureau of Land Management. March 1999. *Plan Maintenance Documentation - To Change the Implementation Schedule for Survey and Manage and Protection Buffer Species*.

USDI, Bureau of Land Management and Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. 1998. *Protocol Agreement*.



UNITED STATES
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ODF/BLM COOP AGREEMENT
PERMIT # E-213

PROPOSED ACTION

T. 17S. , R. 8W. , SEC. 24 , WILL. MER., EUGENE DISTRICT



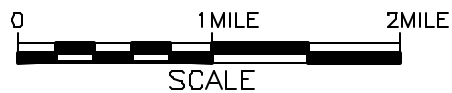
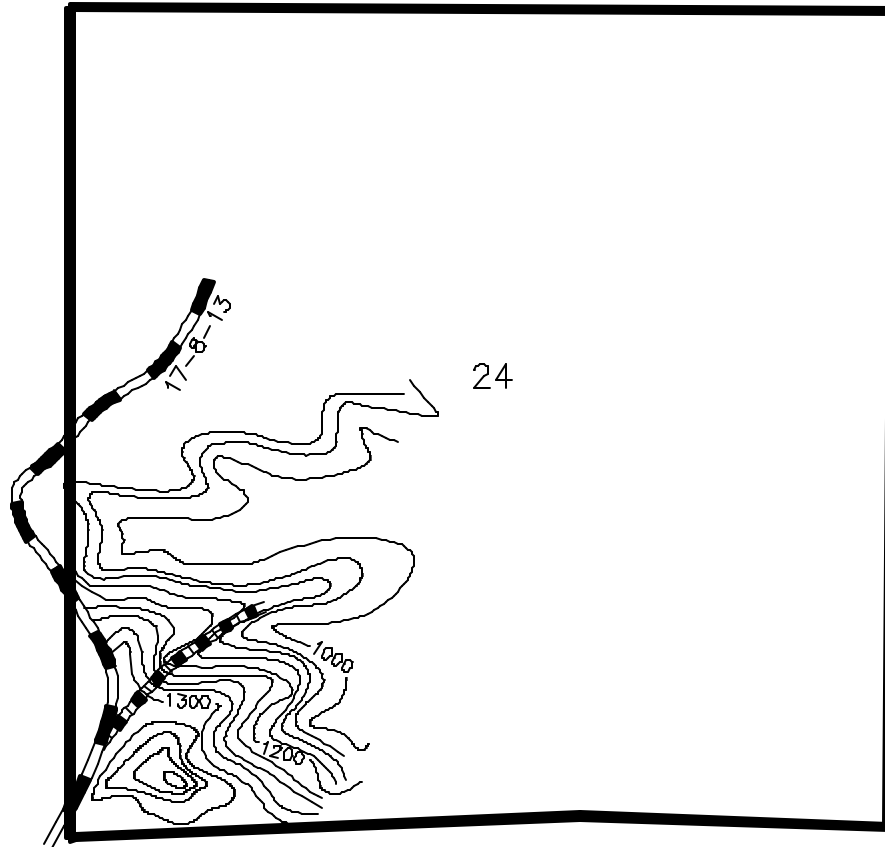
LEGEND

-  ROCK SURFACED ROAD
-  ROAD TO BE CONSTRUCTED



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NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE 1

T. 17S. , R. 8W. , SEC. 24 , WILL. MER., EUGENE DISTRICT

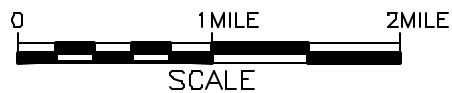
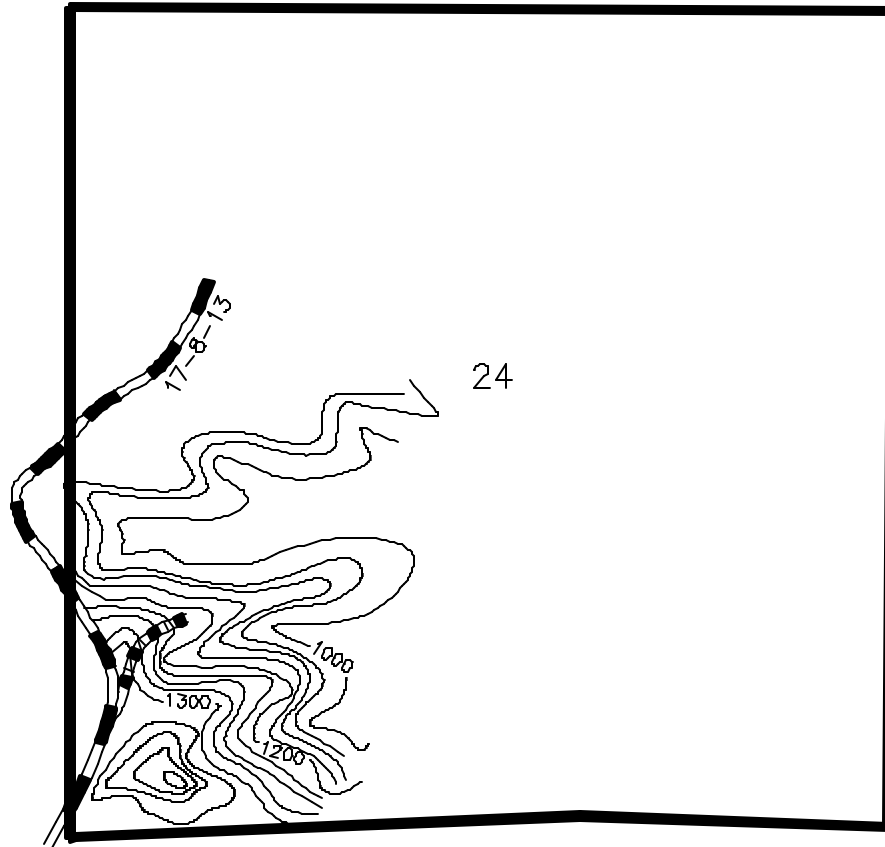


LEGEND



-  ROCK SURFACED ROAD
-  ROAD TO BE CONSTRUCTED

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PERMIT # E-213
NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE 2

T. 17S. , R. 8W. , SEC. 24 , WILL. MER., EUGENE DISTRICT



LEGEND

-  ROCK SURFACED ROAD
-  ROAD TO BE CONSTRUCTED

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UNITED STATES
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PRELIMINARY FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
ODF/BLM Cooperative Agreement, Right-of-Way Permit E-213
Environmental Assessment No. OR090-EA-99-04

PRELIMINARY FONSI:

On the basis of the information contained in the Environmental Assessment, and all other information available to me, it is my determination that implementation of the proposed action will not have significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the *Record of Decision (ROD) for Amendments to Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Planning Documents Within the Range of the Northern Spotted Owl* (April 1994) and the *Eugene District Record of Decision and Resource Management Plan* (June 1995), with which this EA is in conformance, and does not constitute a major federal action having a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement or a supplement to the existing environmental impact statement is not necessary and will not be prepared